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ABSTRACT

To involve university faculty in some useful community service there must be clear definitions and a system of reward. Three levels of community service are outlined, from long-term extensive activities to short-term involvements. Criteria are suggested for evaluating these services. These guidelines are useful for faculty groups who are seeking to systematize and evaluate the frequently chaotic situation created when individual faculty put forth his/her own activities on an annual "brag sheet" or load report. The guidelines are stated without reference to particular subject matter and are applicable to all departments and colleges. (Author/LEH)

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ASSESSING FACULTY'S
COMMUNITY SERVICE

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Unpublished faculty who neither write nor conduct research justify the value of their services in a variety of creative ways. The most common is teaching. In urban universities, or in institutions with an avowed outreach function, community service is frequently used as a rationale for merit or promotion.

Community service is defined in various ways. Most commonly, it is anything a particular faculty member deems it to be. Speeches at the Rotary or P.T.A. are listed along with consultantships in Venezuela, followed by luncheon advice to a local alderman and service on a YMCA board of directors. In short, the definition of community service is the cumulated odds and ends which the particular faculty chooses to itemize on an annual load report.

Compounding this problem of lack of agreement on what constitutes community service is the fact that the judges don't agree. The Departmental Executive Committees, senior faculty, and Deans who actually award merit and who approve faculty promotions all have their individual and unagreed-upon criteria for answering the questions: What is community service? How does one assess its quality?

One explanation for this lack of agreement is that community service is a much more complex concept than

publication. Another explanation is that senior faculty have themselves been well rewarded on idiosyncratic definitions of community service. They are understandably sensitive to cleaning up and systematizing a definition that they have benefitted from keeping nebulous.

The scheme which follows, therefore, is not expected to rectify a deeply ingrained process of murkiness. It is merely a first step toward establishing open discussion. Hopefully, each institution and various colleges and departments within an institution will clarify community service in ways that are most appropriate for their situation.

What is needed now is the courage to be "wrong;" that is, to set down in writing criteria which may have to be revised on an annual basis. This process will enable the faculty seeking reward and those doing the judging (and frequently these are the same individuals) to know what is expected, what is appropriate to include as community service, and how to evaluate the service.

At large complex institutions, one is struck by the diversity of faculty activities. A system of categorization must be truly remarkable to equitably account for the activities of artists, nurses, political scientists, botanists, business educators, architects, social workers,

engineers, teacher educators, physical therapists, and philosophers. It is necessary, therefore, that each of these groups adapt any criteria to their own fields and disciplines.

In the scheme which follows, several controversial issues are left for particular departments to resolve for themselves. Should a service performed for a fee or honorarium be considered community service? Should service on institutional committees, program development, and curriculum revision be included?

One issue we have taken a position on is that teaching does not become transformed into community service because the teaching occurs in the evening or off campus. The quality of teaching should be judged by peers and students on the same criteria wherever it occurs. Given the general acceptance of the need for public higher education to serve a broad spectrum of society, it seems anachronistic to still suggest that teaching at night or in a building away from campus is, by definition, meritorious. In an increasing number of institutions, more and more faculty will be willing to teach anywhere, at any time, in order to remain fully employed.

Another area that is purposely unspecified refers to credit. Whether particular activities generate credit or tuition should not be used as a determinant of their community service value. This is simply the converse of assuming that any non-credit pastime is, by definition, of value to the community.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING COMMUNITY
SERVICE OF COLLEGE FACULTY

CRITERIA

Activities listed as community service should:

1. Serve non-academic community organizations and/or government agencies outside the University
2. Bring the contribution of the individual's professional background and skills to government and community concerns. Community activities not utilizing a candidate's professional skills would not ordinarily be considered, e.g., leadership in a non-related community group or church organization
3. Advance the ability of the University to relate teaching and research activities to community concerns
4. Expand the candidate's teaching and research capabilities

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

First-Level Examples - These services extend over at least one academic year and involve primary responsibility for:

1. Extensive consultation for a government agency or community group

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2. Developing a significant community program or activity
 3. Coordination of a major research project, significant role in government task force study or other large community research undertaking

Second-Level Examples - These services require continued involvement with a group or agency for a period of 4-6 months and involve:

1. Assistance with a series of seminars, staff training workshops, etc., for government or community organizations
2. Preparation of reports, research papers, planning guides, etc., for groups
3. Supervision of major class projects providing assistance to community groups or government departments

Third-Level Examples - These services require continued involvement with the group or agency for a period of 2-3 months (or a series of short meetings over a longer period of time) and include:

- 1-4. Second-level examples listed above, if activities involve a shorter period of time and less involvement
5. Organization of conferences, clinics, etc., on community issues
6. Active participation on advisory or planning committees
7. Supervision of meaningful student research for government departments or community groups

Fourth-Level Examples - These services are one-time activities involving 2-3 days of preparation and refer to:

1. Making presentations, radio and television appearances, discussion leader, etc.
2. Writing articles in government and community publications
3. Providing information sources for agencies and groups
4. Assigning meaningful student research related to government departments or community groups

DOCUMENTATION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Each faculty member's curriculum vitae should include information on community service activities. A separate report should include specifics on major community

service work, time involved, remuneration received (if any), etc. Examples of proposals, reports, descriptions from professional journals or public media and other supporting documents may be included.

The faculty member's report should document that the community service performed meets the evaluation criteria listed below. Letters of evaluation from the organizations or agencies served are one example of documentation.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SERVICE

Faculty committees may consider community service excellence by reviewing evidence of the faculty member's performance of community service. It is incumbent on the faculty member to demonstrate that he or she:

1. Accurately and clearly perceived relevant problems of potential government and community groups or agencies and demonstrated familiarity with existing and past programs
2. Clearly identified the objectives and anticipated outcomes of potential programs and/or services
3. Worked effectively with community groups or agencies in conceiving and developing plans for programs and/or services
4. Demonstrated creativity and innovative skill

in marshalling university and community resources to implement programs and/or service

5. Provided effective leadership in the coordination, management, evaluation and reporting of programs and/or services
6. Appropriately reported and disseminated program and/or activity results

Clarifying the meaning of community service will not be an easy task. The benefits of higher faculty morale, more equitable determination of merit and promotion and greater public understanding should make the effort worthwhile.